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SUBJECT: HOA PIRACY: ITALY PLEDGES FRIGATE FOR ESDP
COUNTER-PIRACY MISSION

REF: ROME 1567

Classified By: Acting Deputy Chief of Mission Barbara A. Leaf. Reasons
1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. C) The Italian MOD confirmed to Pol-Mil Off on December 24 that Italy plans to contribute a Maestrone-class Frigate or Soldati-class fleet patrol boat to the ESDP ATALANTA counter-piracy mission. The mission was approved by the Council of Ministers in the year-end GOI overseas missions decree which included 8 million Euros to fund Italian participation in the mission. MOD sources inform us that this is sufficient to sustain an Italian frigate as part of the EU mission. The issue will now go to Chief of Defense Gen. Camporini for decision and implementation and then to Parliament for formal approval. According to Italian Navy sources these steps are largely a formality but may slow deployment somewhat. Maestrone-class frigates usually carry a complement of 227 personnel and two helicopters. The Italian Navy recommendation is that the vessel be approved for a six month deployment starting as soon as possible, perhaps by the end of January. In addition to the vessel, Italy has already deployed two officers to the UK headquarters in Norwood who will remain there for the duration of the operation.

¶2. C) Embassy Rome believes that the GOI decision to provide substantial assets for the ESDP mission, in addition to the resources Italy contributed under Operation Allied Provider and its on-going contribution of intelligence and other military capabilities to both the NATO and the EU effort (outlined in ref tel) strengthens the case for including Italy in the expanded Contact Group on Somali Piracy. The Ambassador will meet with Foreign Minister Frattini on January 5 and we expect the Foreign Minister to raise Italy's desire to be part of the Contact Group.

DIBBLE